

Bachelor's degrees conferred, by field of study and race/ethnicity

Changing opportunities within the job market affect the fields in which students choose to major. In turn, the majors that students choose affect the demand for courses and faculty, as well as the supply of new graduates in different fields. Trends in the number and proportion of bachelor's degrees conferred in different fields, as well as how these degrees are distributed across racial/ethnic groups, not only helps to identify changing conditions in the supply and demand of the job market, but also provides some insight into the diversity of the Nation's future work force.

- After declining for several years, the number of degrees conferred in the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences has grown since the mid-1980s. Combined with business management degrees, these three types of degrees have constituted half or more of all degrees conferred since 1971.
- Between 1977 and 1995, blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to earn bachelor's degrees in the social and behavioral sciences, while whites were more likely to earn degrees in the natural sciences (see supplemental table 29-1).
- After a sharp decline between 1986 and 1992, the number of degrees conferred in computer sciences and engineering leveled off between 1993 and 1995.
- The percentage of degrees conferred in health sciences was twice as large in 1995 as it was in 1971 (7 versus 3 percent), while the percentage of degrees conferred in education decreased by more than one-half during the same period (21 versus 9 percent).

Index of the number of bachelor's degrees conferred and the percentage distribution of total bachelor's degrees conferred, by field of study: Academic years ending 1971–95

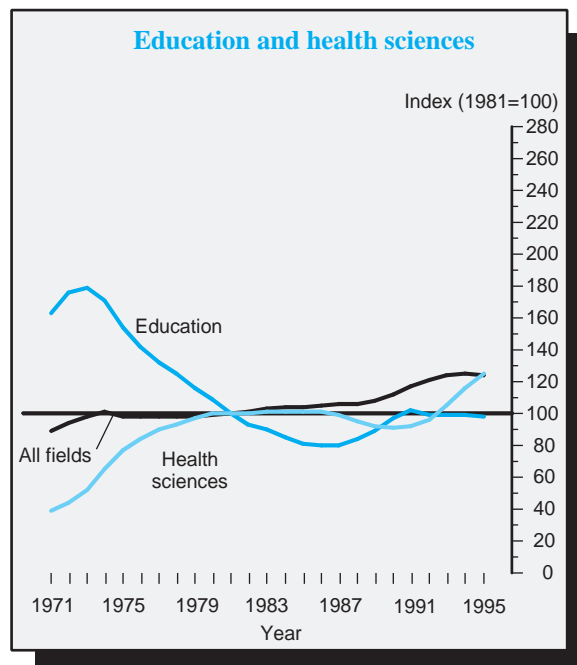
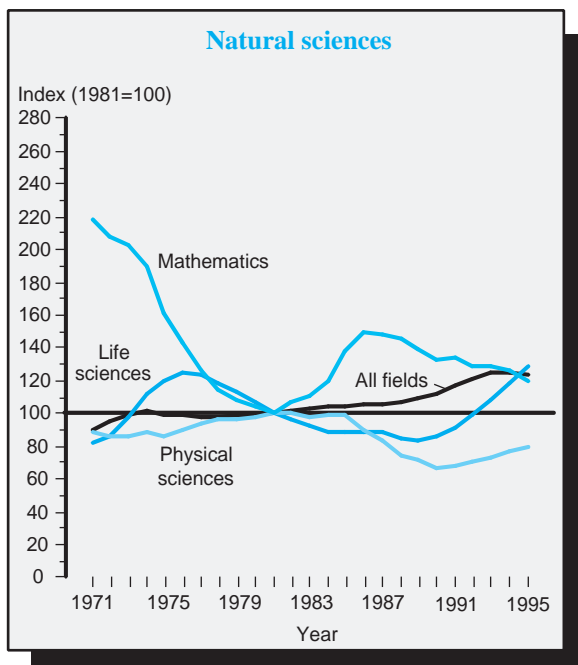
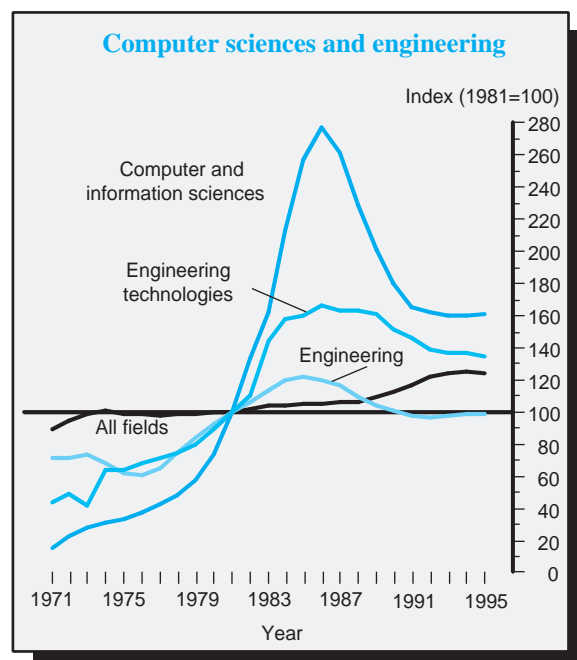
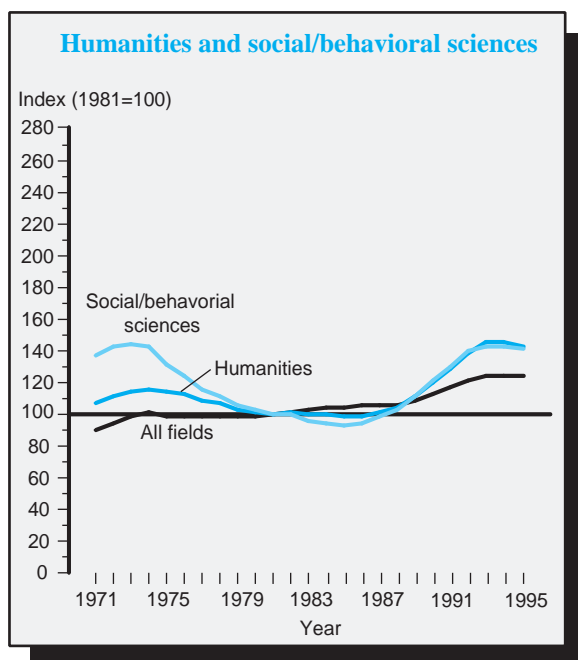
Field of study	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Index of the number of degrees (1981=100)									
All fields	89.8	99.0	100.0	105.6	117.0	121.5	124.6	125.0	124.1
Humanities	107.1	112.4	100.0	99.0	128.6	138.7	145.1	145.1	143.5
Social/behavioral sciences	136.7	124.8	100.0	95.0	129.8	139.5	143.0	143.3	141.4
Life sciences	82.7	125.6	100.0	89.1	91.5	99.4	108.8	118.9	129.5
Physical sciences	89.4	89.6	100.0	90.7	68.2	70.8	73.3	76.8	80.1
Mathematics	218.1	142.8	100.0	150.0	133.9	129.3	129.6	125.9	120.0
Computer and information sciences	15.8	37.4	100.0	277.0	165.9	162.4	160.0	160.0	161.4
Engineering	70.9	60.7	100.0	120.4	97.2	96.7	97.9	98.3	98.5
Engineering technologies	44.0	67.8	100.0	165.9	146.2	139.5	137.3	136.6	135.0
Education	163.1	142.9	100.0	80.6	102.5	99.9	99.7	99.6	98.2
Business management	57.7	71.4	100.0	119.3	125.3	129.0	129.1	124.0	117.8
Health sciences	39.6	84.8	100.0	101.2	92.8	97.0	105.4	116.9	125.5
Other technical/professional	43.2	86.6	100.0	97.3	109.2	119.4	124.7	127.6	128.6
Percentage distribution of total degrees									
All fields	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Humanities	17.1	16.3	14.3	13.4	15.7	16.3	16.7	16.6	16.6
Social/behavioral sciences	23.0	19.1	15.1	13.6	16.8	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.3
Life sciences	4.3	5.9	4.6	3.9	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.4	4.8
Physical sciences	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7
Mathematics	3.0	1.8	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2
Computer and information sciences	0.3	0.6	1.6	4.2	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1
Engineering	5.3	4.1	6.8	7.7	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.4
Engineering technologies	0.6	0.9	1.3	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Education	21.0	16.7	11.6	8.8	10.1	9.5	9.3	9.2	9.1
Business management	13.7	15.3	21.3	24.0	22.8	22.6	22.0	21.1	20.2
Health sciences	3.0	5.9	6.8	6.5	5.4	5.4	5.8	6.4	6.9
Other technical/professional	6.2	11.2	12.8	11.8	12.0	12.6	12.9	13.1	13.3

NOTE: The index of the number of bachelor's degrees conferred is calculated as the number of degrees conferred in a given field of study divided by the number of degrees conferred in the same field in 1981. A value greater than 100 indicates that more bachelor's degrees were conferred in that field of study in that year than in 1981, while a value less than 100 indicates that fewer bachelor's degrees were conferred in that

field in that year than in 1981. Details may not add to totals due to rounding. See the supplemental note to this indicator for a description of the fields of study.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1997* (based on IPEDS/HEGIS "Completions" surveys).

**Index of the number of bachelor's degrees conferred,
by fields of study: Academic years ending 1971–95**



NOTE: See the supplemental note to this indicator for a description of the fields of study.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1997 (based on IPEDS/HEGIS "Completions" surveys).

Table 29-1 Minority field concentration ratio¹ and dissimilarity index² at the bachelor's degree level: Academic years ending 1977–95

Field of study	1977	1979	1981	1985	1987	1989	1990	1991 ³	1992	1993	1994	1995
Black												
Humanities and social/behavioral sciences	1.02	1.03	1.01	0.98	0.94	0.92	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.94	0.96	0.96
Humanities	0.69	0.78	0.74	0.83	0.83	0.80	0.81	0.78	0.80	0.80	0.82	0.82
Social and behavioral sciences	1.32	1.27	1.27	1.13	1.06	1.04	1.05	1.07	1.07	1.08	1.09	1.10
Natural and computer sciences and engineering	0.60	0.61	0.66	0.75	0.90	0.94	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.94	0.91	0.90
Natural sciences	0.65	0.69	0.74	0.81	0.87	0.91	0.90	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.86	0.83
Life sciences	0.70	0.77	0.81	0.92	0.92	1.00	0.99	0.96	0.95	0.95	0.87	0.83
Physical sciences	0.45	0.44	0.57	0.58	0.73	0.72	0.73	0.79	0.77	0.72	0.71	0.72
Mathematics	0.78	0.85	0.82	0.91	0.93	0.95	0.88	0.96	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Computer sciences and engineering	0.51	0.51	0.59	0.71	0.92	0.96	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.97
Computer and information sciences	0.91	0.91	0.83	0.98	1.44	1.68	1.71	1.59	1.61	1.67	1.70	1.68
Engineering ³	0.45	0.45	0.54	0.48	0.61	0.60	0.63	0.68	0.68	0.70	0.67	0.68
Engineering technologies	—	—	—	1.04	1.08	1.08	1.14	1.19	1.17	1.01	1.05	1.07
Technical and professional	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.07	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.05	1.06	1.06
Education	1.42	1.40	1.35	1.01	0.81	0.71	0.66	0.67	0.69	0.70	0.74	0.75
Business and management	1.03	1.01	1.02	1.09	1.07	1.07	1.09	1.12	1.13	1.14	1.19	1.20
Health sciences	0.84	0.81	0.84	0.99	1.03	1.15	1.20	1.17	1.05	1.02	0.87	0.92
Other technical/professional	0.97	1.10	1.18	1.29	1.29	1.29	1.29	1.26	1.23	1.21	1.17	1.16
Dissimilarity Index	12.7	11.2	10.8	³ 7.8	³ 7.9	³ 8.8	³ 9.3	9.5	8.7	8.5	9.2	9.1
Hispanic												
Humanities and social/behavioral sciences	1.23	1.22	1.20	1.15	1.11	1.14	1.13	1.10	1.17	1.18	1.21	1.22
Humanities	1.17	1.15	1.11	1.09	1.10	1.10	1.12	1.06	1.13	1.19	1.22	1.24
Social and behavioral sciences	1.29	1.28	1.29	1.20	1.13	1.18	1.14	1.13	1.22	1.17	1.20	1.20
Natural and computer sciences and engineering	0.85	0.88	0.91	0.92	1.05	1.05	1.07	1.07	1.03	0.99	0.96	0.94
Natural sciences	0.82	0.89	0.94	0.95	0.98	1.01	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.92	0.91	0.84
Life sciences	0.89	1.04	1.13	1.25	1.26	1.25	1.18	1.20	1.16	1.08	1.03	0.94
Physical sciences	0.71	0.66	0.70	0.64	0.77	0.77	0.70	0.71	0.63	0.64	0.65	0.55
Mathematics	0.76	0.76	0.72	0.67	0.62	0.72	0.80	0.80	0.88	0.77	0.87	0.83
Computer sciences and engineering	0.90	0.86	0.87	0.91	1.09	1.08	1.12	1.13	1.07	1.05	1.00	1.03
Computer and information sciences	0.73	0.84	0.89	0.84	1.11	1.15	1.18	1.26	1.20	1.09	1.03	1.14
Engineering ³	0.92	0.86	0.87	0.93	1.09	1.09	1.07	1.10	1.04	1.05	1.00	1.03
Engineering technologies	—	—	—	0.97	1.08	0.95	1.21	1.03	0.98	1.00	0.95	0.93
Technical/professional	0.89	0.91	0.92	0.95	0.92	0.90	0.90	0.92	0.88	0.88	0.87	0.87
Education	1.05	1.11	1.12	1.04	0.89	0.74	0.81	0.86	0.73	0.64	0.64	0.62
Business and management	0.84	0.85	0.87	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.98	1.00	1.03
Health sciences	0.72	0.76	0.75	0.89	0.75	0.79	0.87	0.85	0.78	0.74	0.68	0.66
Other technical/professional	0.84	0.87	0.90	0.96	0.93	0.96	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.97	0.94	0.94
Dissimilarity Index	8.7	8.5	8.0	5.3	5.3	³ 6.0	5.9	5.1	7.1	7.0	7.4	8.4

Table 29-1 Minority field concentration ratio¹ and dissimilarity index² at the bachelor's degree level: Academic years ending 1977–95—Continued

Field of study	1977	1979	1981	1985	1987	1989	1990	1991 ³	1992	1993	1994	1995
Asian/Pacific Islander												
Humanities and social/behavioral sciences	0.96	0.92	0.87	0.82	0.86	0.88	0.87	0.86	0.88	0.88	0.90	0.90
Humanities	0.90	0.88	0.84	0.79	0.82	0.80	0.81	0.80	0.81	0.83	0.85	0.83
Social and behavioral sciences	1.02	0.96	0.89	0.84	0.90	0.95	0.93	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.96	0.97
Natural and computer sciences and engineering	1.55	1.69	1.89	2.01	2.13	2.23	2.35	2.38	2.32	2.26	2.15	2.11
Natural sciences	1.46	1.56	1.56	1.81	1.91	2.01	2.13	2.13	2.16	2.16	2.11	2.14
Life sciences	1.62	1.78	1.72	1.99	2.16	2.33	2.54	2.55	2.71	2.68	2.64	2.62
Physical sciences	1.06	1.07	1.21	1.20	1.38	1.47	1.63	1.62	1.46	1.45	1.26	1.36
Mathematics	1.48	1.65	1.78	2.35	2.00	1.88	1.67	1.64	1.46	1.44	1.41	1.41
Computer sciences and engineering	1.70	1.85	2.19	2.13	2.25	2.38	2.50	2.57	2.45	2.35	2.18	2.08
Computer and information sciences	1.74	1.85	2.29	2.12	2.17	2.41	2.58	2.52	2.48	2.56	2.39	2.30
Engineering ³	1.70	1.85	2.16	2.39	2.55	2.72	2.86	2.99	2.79	2.63	2.45	2.34
Engineering technologies	—	—	—	1.12	1.32	1.22	1.18	1.22	1.21	1.10	0.96	0.87
Technical/professional	0.86	0.83	0.78	0.69	0.65	0.68	0.68	0.69	0.71	0.72	0.73	0.73
Education	0.42	0.38	0.33	0.32	0.36	0.29	0.22	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.20	0.22
Business and management	1.15	1.08	0.97	0.87	0.76	0.87	0.90	0.96	1.01	1.06	1.10	1.13
Health sciences	1.16	1.02	0.99	0.77	0.73	0.76	0.86	0.88	0.87	0.82	0.82	0.81
Other technical/professional	0.87	0.83	0.75	0.58	0.62	0.57	0.55	0.55	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.51
Dissimilarity Index	13.1	13.8	16.1	21.8	22.9	21.5	21.7	21.3	20.1	20.2	19.8	20.3
American Indian/Alaskan Native												
Humanities and social/behavioral sciences	1.02	1.08	1.14	1.09	1.11	1.02	1.05	1.00	1.03	1.08	1.08	1.06
Humanities	0.94	0.92	1.03	1.05	1.07	1.02	1.07	1.00	1.04	1.03	1.04	1.04
Social and behavioral sciences	1.10	1.23	1.25	1.14	1.16	1.02	1.03	0.99	1.02	1.13	1.11	1.07
Natural and computer sciences and engineering	0.76	0.75	0.69	0.87	0.87	0.94	0.83	0.91	0.87	0.89	0.87	0.89
Natural sciences	0.76	0.81	0.73	0.96	0.94	1.01	0.94	1.04	0.91	0.98	0.93	0.93
Life sciences	0.80	0.81	0.83	0.98	1.00	1.10	0.91	1.16	1.01	1.00	0.98	0.97
Physical sciences	0.81	0.72	0.69	0.92	0.91	0.93	1.14	1.04	0.85	1.09	0.86	0.92
Mathematics	0.50	0.95	0.43	0.94	0.83	0.89	0.81	0.76	0.70	0.79	0.82	0.77
Computer sciences and engineering	0.77	0.69	0.66	0.82	0.83	0.90	0.75	0.82	0.84	0.81	0.82	0.86
Computer and information sciences	0.66	0.35	0.38	0.86	0.81	0.86	0.96	0.92	0.85	0.84	0.74	0.98
Engineering ³	0.79	0.73	0.72	0.67	0.79	0.74	0.62	0.70	0.73	0.66	0.74	0.70
Engineering technologies	—	—	—	1.31	1.01	1.46	0.91	1.07	1.22	1.33	1.19	1.28
Technical/professional	1.06	1.03	1.02	1.00	0.99	1.00	1.02	1.03	1.02	0.98	0.99	1.00
Education	1.37	1.39	1.36	1.21	1.23	1.31	1.25	1.24	1.21	1.11	1.17	1.26
Business and management	0.79	0.79	0.82	0.91	0.81	0.83	0.81	0.84	0.82	0.86	0.82	0.78
Health sciences	0.73	0.87	0.83	0.96	1.05	1.02	1.08	1.14	1.15	1.03	0.96	0.97
Other technical/professional	1.21	1.10	1.16	1.05	1.14	1.08	1.19	1.13	1.14	1.05	1.12	1.11
Dissimilarity Index	10.0	10.3	10.5	³ 5.7	7.2	³ 6.2	7.3	5.8	6.3	5.3	6.2	6.5

Table 29-1 Minority field concentration ratio¹ and dissimilarity index² at the bachelor's degree level: Academic years ending 1977–95—Continued

Field of study	1977	1979	1981	1985	1987	1989	1990	1991 ³	1992	1993	1994	1995
	Nonresident alien											
Humanities and social/behavioral sciences	0.73	0.76	0.69	0.69	0.65	0.65	0.68	0.71	0.73	0.74	0.73	0.75
Humanities	0.71	0.76	0.65	0.66	0.63	0.65	0.67	0.72	0.75	0.76	0.74	0.78
Social and behavioral sciences	0.75	0.76	0.73	0.71	0.68	0.66	0.69	0.70	0.71	0.73	0.72	0.72
Natural and computer sciences and engineering	2.32	2.39	2.48	1.96	2.06	2.21	2.32	2.20	2.19	2.07	1.91	1.80
Natural sciences	1.22	1.19	1.10	1.08	1.02	1.16	1.20	1.24	1.23	1.20	1.03	0.95
Life sciences	1.11	0.93	0.86	0.81	0.81	0.97	0.98	1.07	0.99	1.00	0.82	0.76
Physical sciences	1.44	1.50	1.23	1.08	1.09	1.34	1.45	1.40	1.44	1.57	1.31	1.17
Mathematics	1.30	1.61	1.72	1.77	1.42	1.39	1.44	1.49	1.66	1.35	1.36	1.38
Computer sciences and engineering	4.19	3.89	3.77	2.50	2.67	2.87	3.07	2.91	2.93	2.78	2.69	2.58
Computer and information sciences	2.48	2.28	2.21	1.91	2.54	3.14	3.45	3.54	3.81	3.92	3.86	3.56
Engineering ³	4.42	4.12	4.09	3.43	3.48	3.64	3.84	3.08	3.06	2.89	2.73	2.66
Engineering technologies	—	—	—	2.21	1.76	1.27	1.50	1.53	1.28	0.95	1.05	1.06
Technical/professional	0.77	0.70	0.68	0.78	0.79	0.81	0.80	0.84	0.84	0.87	0.91	0.92
Education	0.30	0.36	0.35	0.37	0.31	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.19
Business and management	1.28	1.04	0.94	1.07	1.14	1.21	1.21	1.29	1.36	1.45	1.64	1.77
Health sciences	0.64	0.48	0.37	0.42	0.41	0.47	0.54	0.61	0.55	0.53	0.45	0.38
Other technical/professional	0.73	0.69	0.73	0.72	0.66	0.67	0.66	0.64	0.61	0.60	0.59	0.56
Dissimilarity Index	24.9	22.4	22.5	20.4	23.9	25.3	25.7	26.1	27.4	28.1	30.3	31.1

— Data not available for this field prior to 1985.

¹ The minority field concentration ratio is calculated as the percentage of a minority group earning bachelor's degrees who majored in a selected field of study divided by the percentage of whites earning bachelor's degrees who majored in the same field. For example, the 1995 black to white concentration ratio for education = $7.6/10.2 = .75$. A value greater than 1 indicates that minority graduates are more likely to major in that field than whites, while a value less than 1 indicates that minority graduates are less likely to major in that field than whites.

² The dissimilarity index represents the percentage distribution of students in a minority group who would need to switch fields of study to match the

percentage distribution of white students majoring in the same field of study. It is calculated as the sum of the absolute difference between the percentage of minority and white students majoring in each field divided by 2.

³ Revised from previously published figures.

NOTE: See supplemental note to this indicator for a description of fields of study.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, various years (based on IPEDS/HEGIS "Completions" surveys).

Note to Indicator 29: Classification of fields of study

The data on the number of bachelor's degrees conferred by specific fields of study were obtained from the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred" surveys and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) "Completions" surveys. The list below shows how related degree fields were reclassified into consolidated degree fields for this analysis.

Consolidated degree field

Degree fields

Humanities	Area and ethnic studies
	English language and literature/letters
	Foreign languages
	Liberal/general studies
	Multi/interdisciplinary studies
	Philosophy and religion
	Theology
Social and behavioral sciences	Visual and performing arts
	Psychology
Natural sciences	Social sciences and history
	Biological sciences/life sciences
	Mathematics
	Physical sciences
Engineering and engineering technologies	Engineering
	Engineering-related technologies
	Construction trades
	Mechanics and repairs

Other technical/
professional

Agriculture
Architecture
Communications
Communication technology
Home economics
Law
Library/archival sciences
Military sciences
Parks and recreation
Precision production trades
Protective sciences
Public administration and services
Transportation and material moving

In the 1991–92 academic year, a new classification of instructional programs was initiated. The figures for earlier years were reclassified when necessary to make them conform to the new taxonomy. To facilitate trend comparisons, certain aggregations were created from the degree fields as reported in the IPEDS "Completions" surveys: "Agriculture" includes agricultural business and production, agricultural sciences, and conservation and renewable natural resources, and "Business Management" includes business management and administrative services, marketing operations/marketing and distribution, and personal and miscellaneous services.